

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03 EUR-12 MCT-01 ACDA-12 /094 W
-----084126 290758Z /14

P 290556Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5202
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SANA 3172

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, YE
SUBJ: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN YAR

BEGIN SUMMARY: DEATHS OF AHMED AL-GHASHMI AND SALIM RUBAYI ALI MAY MARK WATERSHED IN YEMENI DEALINGS WITH SOUTH YEMEN AND SOVIETS, PARTICULARLY TO JUDGE BY SOME BITS AND PIECES OF EVENTS WHICH ARE NOW SURFACING FROM LAST DAYS OF AHMED AL-GHASHMI. FOR THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, CONCENTRATION IS ON COMPOSITION AND PROGRAM OF NEW GOVERNMENT. WHILE THERE IS PRESSURE BUILDING TO INCLUDE ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN AND MOUJAHID ABU SHAWARIB AND PERHAPS SOME MEMBERS OF BEIT ABU LUHUM IN AN EXPANSION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, SAUDIS SEEM TO HAVE FIXED ON PRESENT FOUR-MAN COUNCIL AS BEST WAY TO PROCEED IN NEAR TERM. YARG, IN MEANTIME, IS CONCENTRATING ON INVESTIGATION OF GHASHMI DEATH AND PROBLEMS OF BRINGING OUT THEIR BELIEF THAT IT WAS ABD AL-FATTAH, NOT SALIM RUBAYI ALI, WHO PERPETRATED MURDER OF GHASHMI AND, OF COURSE, DEPOSAL OF SALIM IN ADEN. END SUMMARY.

1. AS REPORTED EARLIER, AHMED AL-GHASHMI DEVELOPED OVER LAST SEVERAL MONTHS EXTENSIVE CONTACTS WITH SALIM RUBAYI ALI AND WAS IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH HIM

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ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DURING AND AFTER ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM AFFAIR. THOUGH GHASHMI TOLD CHARGE HE DID NOT THINK SALIM HAD REALLY DONE ANYTHING TO LIMIT SUPPORT TO ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM, YAHYA MUTAWAKKIL REPORTS THAT AFTER ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM FLED AND GHASHMI HAD MADE TRIUMPHANT TOUR OF HUJARIYYA REGION PASSING OUT PROMISES OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, THERE WAS ANOTHER

TELEPHONE EXCHANGE FROM HODEIDAH BETWEEN GHASHMI AND SALIM. EMBASSY HEARD OF THIS CALL EARLIER BUT DISMISSED IT BECAUSE WE WERE TOLD RESULT WAS GHASHMI SENT SALIM "A LOT OF QAT." (WE CONCLUDED AT TIME THAT YEMENIS WERE VERY MUCH ALIKE, EVEN IF THEY WERE COMMUNISTS YEMENIS.) ACCORDING TO MUTAWAKKIL, HOWEVER, QAT CONTAINED "VERY LARGE SUM OF MONEY" AND WAS IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST BY SALIM WHO WAS IN NEED OF STRENGTHENING HIS DEFENSES IN SOUTH. THERE WAS CONTINUING CORRESPONDENCE AND CALLS BETWEEN SALIM AND GHASHMI CONCERNING HOSTAGES BUT, ACCORDING TO MUTAWAKKIL, MESSENGER WAS EXPECTED TO BRING TO GHASHMI REPORTS BASED ON DEBRIEFINGS OF ABDALLAH ABD AL-ALIM. THIS WOULD HAVE GIVEN GHASHMI MEANS TO ARREST AND TRY NLF SUPPORTERS IN NORTH AND GIVEN SALIM ISSUE ON WHICH TO ATTACK ABD AL-FATTAH ISMAIL. MUTAWAKKIL CONCLUDES THAT THROUGH PDRY INTELLIGENCE PENETRATIONS IN YAR OR PENETRATIONS OF INNER CIRCLE AROUND SALIM IN PDRY, ABD AL-FATTAH FOUND OUT ABOUT SALIM -- GHASHMI'S PLOTTING AGAINST HIM AND TURNED THE TABLES WITH THE BOMB.

2. WHILE THIS STORY CANNOT BE CONFIRMED IT CLEARLY

POINTS UP THE PROBLEMS YARG HAS WITH MURDER INVESTIGATION WHICH IS PRESENTLY BEING PRESSED IN MARATHON SESSIONS IN NATIONAL SECURITY. YEMENIS ARE CAUGHT IN DILEMMA OF THEIR OWN MAKING, HOWEVER, BECAUSE THEY
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ORIGINALLY ACCUSED SALIM RUBAYI ALI OF PLOTTING AGAINST GHASHMI WHEN, IN FACT, THEY NOW THINK ISMAIL WAS CULPRIT. THEIR INITIAL STATEMENTS NOW PUT ABD AL-FATTAH IN POSITION OF ADDUCING PROOF OF YAR ACCUSATION, USURPING WHATEVER BENEFITS SALIM USED TO ENJOY AS A RESULT OF HIS POLICY OF "YEMENIYYAH." ASNAJ, FOR MOMENT, SEES NO WAY OUT OF THIS DILEMMA. WHILE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE OF WHICH HE IS PART CAN OF COURSE NOT RPT NOT COME UP WITH ANY EVIDENCE OF ABD AL-FATTAH MANEUVERING, THEY HAVE ON OTHER HAND FAIR AMOUNT OF EVIDENCE OF GHASHMI DEALINGS WITH SALIM. YAR MUST PRODUCE EVIDENCE AND STRATEGY BY SATURDAY ARAB LEAGUE MEETING.

3. ANOTHER ASPECT OF GHASHMI'S PROGRAM WHICH HAS NOW COME TO SURFACE TO BEDEVIL PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS NEGOTIATIONS WITH ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN AND MOUJAHID ABU SHAWARIB FOR JOBS IN GHASHMI GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES -- ASNAJ, HUDAYAN, MUTAWAKKIL, KIBSI -- NEGOTIATIONS WERE ALMOST FORMALIZED WITH VICE-PRESIDENTIAL JOB GOING, AS LONG RUMORED, TO ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN. MOUJAHID WOULD BECOME AMBASSADOR OR GOVERNOR WITH APPARENTLY SOME MILITARY JOBS FOR SOME

ABD LUHUM FAMILY MEMBERS. WHEN ASSASSINATION OCCURRED, MOUJAHID WAS IN REMOTE HAJJA. IT TOOK BETTER PART OF DAY TO GET TO SANA. ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN WAS ALSO IN NORTH. GOVERNMENT WAS FORMED WITHOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION OR CONSENT, LARGELY UNDER TUTELAGE OF HUDAYAN AND ASNAJ WHO JOINED DISCUSSIONS BY ARASHI, ALI ABDALLAH SALEH -- WHO FLEW UP FROM TAIZ BY NOON --

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OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03 EUR-12 MCT-01 ACDA-12 /094 W
-----084242 290757Z /14

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5203
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

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ALI AL-SHAYBA AND ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI. FIRST ACT OF NEW GOVERNMENT WAS TO ASK MOUJAHID AND ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN TO HELP CALM TRIBESMEN WHO WERE PREPARING TO DESCEND ON CAPITAL TO LOOK FOR REVENGE AGAINST MURDERER. MOUJAHID AND ABDALLAH COOPERATED IN THIS WITH MOUJAHID CONTAINING HAMDAN AND ABDALLAH TAKING ON REST OF HASHID.

4. UNDERSTANDABLY, MOUJAHID AND ABDALLAH NOW SMART FROM THEIR EXCLUSION FROM GOVERNMENT AND MOUJAHID, IN PARTICULAR, IS DEMANDING POSITION IN ARMY. HUDAYAN THINKS THAT ABDALLAH WILL BE SATISFIED WITH OLD POSITION OF SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT, WHICH ABDUL KARIM AL-ARASHI STILL HOLDS ALTHOUGH HE HAS NOW BEEN MADE PRESIDENT AS WELL. IN THIS DEMAND, MOUJAHID HAS STRONG SUPPORT FROM MUTAWAKKIL AND MAYBE SOME ARMY OFFICERS WHO ARE NOT FRIENDS AND NOT EVEN RESPECTFUL OF YOUNG, AMBITIOUS, RUTHLESS, INEXPERIENCED ALI ABDALLAH SALEH. SAUDIS AND ASNAJ SAY THAT MOUJAHID CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER GOVERNMENT; TILT WILL DEVELOP BETWEEN ALI ABDALLAH SALEH AND MOUJAHID WITH HIGHLY DESTABILIZING RESULTS. ASNAJ STILL SAYS MOUJAHID SHOULD GO

AS AMBASSADOR TO NEW DELHI. ACCORDING TO ASNAJ,
ABU LUHUM GROUP MUST SIMPLY BE FROZEN OUT. "WE
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COULD DO THIS BY THROWING ANY ONE OF THEM IN JAIL FOR
TWO DAYS." HIS CONCERN IS THAT MOUJAHID'S LINKS TO
LUHUMIS WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO RETURN OF MUHSIN
AL-AINI WHO IS BROTHER-IN-LAW OF SINAN ABU LUHUM.

5. THIRD AND MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION CONSUMING
YARG AT MOMENT IS STEPS TO TAKE IN IMMEDIATE FUTURE
TOWARDS SOUTH YEMEN. THERE IS SOME REASON TO THINK
THAT YEMENIS MIGHT JOIN SAUDIS IN MILITARY OPERATION
AGAINST SOUTH, AT LEAST A PUNITIVE EXPEDITION WHICH
COULD BE WITHDRAWN AFTER ALTERING IMAGE OF YEMENI
IMPOTENCE BEFORE RADICAL CONSPIRACIES. CHIEF OF STAFF
ALI ABDALLAH SALEH TOLD CHARGE ON 28 JUNE THAT HIS
DUTY WAS "SECURITY IN YAR AND REVENGE AGAINST THE
SOUTH." THERE HAVE BEEN HINTS IN OTHER CONVERSATIONS
WITH TWINAM THAT YARG CONSIDERING AND EVEN PREPARING
FOR SOME KIND OF STRIKE, PARTICULARLY WHILE PROSPECTS
OF UPRISING REMAIN GOOD AND ARMY IN SOUTH YEMEN IS
IN ANGRY MOOD. BALANCING VIEW BEING HEARD HERE IS
THAT WHILE TROUBLES IN PDRY ARE POTENTIALLY VERY BAD
FOR YAR IN LONGRUN, THEY ARE GOOD IN SHORT RUN AS THEY
PROVIDE NEW GOVERNMENT IN SANA WITH PRECIOUS TIME TO
STRENGTHEN ITS DEFENSES AND COORDINATE ITS POLICY WITH
FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS. WE INTEND IN WEEK TO COME,
WHILE YAR IS PLAYING FOR SUPPORT IN ARAB LEAGUE
AND TESTING DETERMINATION AND EFFICIENCY OF NEW GOVERN-
MENT, TO WARN YEMENIS THAT SUPPLY OF AMERICAN WEAPONS
AND SUPPORT BY USG IS CONFINED TO EFFORTS TO DEFEND
YAR RATHER THAN TO ATTACK ITS DESPICABLE NEIGHBOR TO
SOUTH.

6. EVEN WITHOUT NEAR TERM ATTACKS ON PDRY, WE BELIEVE
SANS HAS REACHED WATERSHED IN ITS RELATIONS WITH ADENI
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REGIME AND SOVIETS. ASNAJ, MUTAWAKKIL, HUDAYAN,
ALI ABDALLAH SALEH ALL SAY FLATLY RUSSIANS MUST BE
EXPOSED AND THROWN OUT OF YEMEN. ASNAJ IS IN RAGE
THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR WHO HAD SAID HIS GOODBYES
AND WAS EXPECTED TO LEAVE ON FRIDAY AEROFLOT TO
MOSCOW NEVERTHELESS INEXPLICABLY CHANGED HIS MIND
AND REMAINED IN SANA AS IF HE HAD SOME FOREWARNING

OF EVENTS THAT LED TO DEATH OF GHASHMI ON
SATURDAY. IN INTERVIEWS WITH TWINAM, CAUTIOUS
MEN LIKE ARASHI AND ABD AL-GHANI AVOIDED COMMIT-
TING THEMSELVES TO RUPTURE OF RELATIONS WITH SOVIETS
BUT THEIR CONDEMNATION OF SOVIET ROLE IN SOUTH CREATES
LOGIC OF ITS OWN FOR NORTH YEMEN. IF PRESENT SANA
RADIO DENUNCIATIONS OF SOUTH CONTINUE, EASIEST TARGET
OF YEMENI WRATH IS LOCAL SOVIET PRESENCE. THIS FLIES
IN FACE OF WHAT EMBASSY SANA KNOWS OF PROPENSITY OF
YEMENIS TO BALANCE EAST AGAINST WEST,
NORTH AGAINST SOUTH, BUT WITH MORE AND MORE
MEMBERS OF THE YEMENI ESTABLISHMENT TROOPING THROUGH
THE HEADQUARTERS TO SEE SHATTERED OFFICE OF PRESIDENT
GHASHMI WITH WINDOWS BLOWN OUT AND CORPSE OF
MESSENGER STILL ON FLOOR FIVE DAYS LATER, MOOD IN THIS
CAPITAL SEEMS TO CALL FOR SOME DRAMATIC ACTION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 29 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANA03172
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780268-0904
Format: TEL
From: SANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978067/aaaaafrp.tel
Line Count: 241
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f6b7568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2391428
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN YAR BEGIN SUMMARY: DEATHS OF AHMED AL-GHASHMI AND SALIM RUBAYI ALI MAY MARK WATERSHED IN YEMENI DEALINGS W
TAGS: PINT, YE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f6b7568b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014